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Classified By: PolCouns Marc L. Desjardins. Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Papua New Guinea's Consul General in Jayapura, Papua shared his views on the often prickly relations between Indonesia and his government in an October 12 meeting. He charged that the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) were involved in both illegal logging and drug smuggling in PNG. He explained that illegal fishing by Indonesians in PNG waters was a major headache; PNG's capacity to enforce its maritime boundary was simply overwhelmed by the sheer number of incursions. The problem was worsened by the sale of border crossing cards by corrupt GOI officials. PNG was a sympathetic but reluctant host to refugees from Indonesian Papua; wherever possible, it dealt with the problem by simply turning a blind eye to them. Underlying suspicions between the two governments had been exposed by Jakarta's nervousness over Governor Suebu's September visit to Port Moresby and the cancellation of PM Somare's July summit with President Yudhoyono. End summary.

¶2. (C) We met October 12 with Jeffrey Tolo'ube, Papua New Guinea's Consul General in Jayapura, Papua, and his First Secretary Nasser Taniei. Given Jakarta's occasional

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suspicions about PNG's intentions towards Indonesia's troubled easternmost province, Tolo'ube occupies a sensitive post. He shared his opinions freely during a one-hour conversation.

A Sympathetic But Reluctant Host

¶3. (C) Tolo'ube noted that PNG's official position was to acknowledge the incorporation of Papua into the Republic of Indonesia without reservation. Moreover, to avoid frictions with its giant neighbor, PNG appeased the GOI in other ways, such as ceasing to refer to Indonesian Papuans who had fled to PNG as "refugees." To placate the GOI, Tolo'ube said, PNG had accepted Indonesia's insistence on the term "illegal border crosser." Despite this, Tolo'ube said, the people of PNG "cannot help but sympathize" with their counterparts west of the border. Although the vast majority of two peoples did not share a common language, the cultural and ethnic kinship was obvious, and the people of PNG had taken note of the GOI's waves of oppression of its Papuans, especially in the 70's and early 80's when thousands of Indonesian Papuans had crossed into PNG. "Whether they are happy matters to us. We notice and care when they are unhappy," he said. PNG Papuans

shared Indonesian Papuans' distress over the continual influx of non-Melanesians into the province, encroaching on indigenous ways of life. "They have the same attachment to the land that we do," he noted.

¶4. (C) Tolo'ube commented on the longstanding problem of Indonesian Papuans seeking refuge in Papua New Guinea, which was an irritant to the GOI. (Note: As the recent uproar over the 43 Papuan asylum seekers in Australia clearly shows, the GOI finds intolerable the very notion of Indonesian refugees or asylum seekers.) Many of these Indonesian Papuans, who had fled earlier waves of repression, now lived in a semi-permanent settlement known as Nine Mile outside Port Moresby. Others had settled in the East Awin refugee settlement across the border from Merauke. The last major wave of refugees, Tolo'ube said, came in December 2001. The PNG government, he said, had cooperated with GOI efforts to induce them to return to Indonesia. Repatriations in December 2003 and 2005, negotiated by the regent of Merauke, had been somewhat successful. One of these groups, he said, had initially settled near the town of Daru in southwest Papua New Guinea. However, as Catholics, they had not been accepted by Protestant locals and had eventually become amenable to repatriation. Tolo'ube said that in recent years, the PNG government's approach had been simply to avoid acknowledging the presence of Indonesian Papuans crossing the border, unless they had done so in large groups who identified themselves as refugees. In these cases, Tolo'ube said, PNG would turn to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Tolo'ube noted, however, that the PNG government would continue to deflect the GOI's longstanding requests for an extradition treaty and a "hot pursuit" agreement. These would only be used by the GOI to round up politically troublesome persons, he said.

TNI Headaches

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¶5. (C) Tolo'ube commented on PNG's occasional headaches with the Armed Forces of Indonesia (TNI). He claimed that the TNI was involved in illegal logging activities in Papua New Guinea, supporting two Indonesian firms) Brilliant Investments and Shantri) operating in northern PNG with the collusion of corrupt local officials in the city of Wewak. Tolo'ube said that on one occasion, a low-flying TNI Hercules aircraft had been tracked by observers from the border to Wewak. It presumably had been carrying materiel and personnel for illegal logging operations, he said.

¶6. (C) The CG went on to say that he had reason to believe the TNI was involved in smuggling marijuana into Indonesia. He claimed that TNI-issued weapons were turning up in the hands of drug smuggling networks in Papua New Guinea. Tolo'ube said he doubted that the marijuana was being sold in Indonesian Papua, but was instead destined for Java.

Troubled Waters

¶7. (C) Turning to border issues, Tolo'ube said illegal fishing continued to be a huge problem. PNG's capacity both to monitor and enforce its maritime border off the north coast was overwhelmed by the sheer number of Indonesian vessels. Most of these, he said, were not even from neighboring waters, but were from as far away as Serui, Biak, and South Sulawesi. The problem was aggravated, he said, by the Indonesian authorities' sale of traditional border crossing cards to anyone who was prepared to pay the right price. Although these cards were meant to meet the needs of longtime residents of border areas, GOI officials now sold them wholesale to people from all over Indonesia.

¶8. (C) PNG's frustration over the illegal fishing situation, Tolo'ube said, had led to the accidental shooting in August

of two Indonesian fishermen in PNG waters. One of PNG's infrequent police boat patrols had given the vessel every signal to stop, he said, and the shots had been fired in an attempt to disable the Indonesian boat's engine. The deaths, he said, had been accidental.

Suspicious Minds

¶9. (C) Poloff asked the reason for the cancellation of PNG Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare's meeting with President Yudhoyono, originally scheduled for July (reftel) when the two leaders were supposed to have inaugurated a new border crossing. The vague explanation Tolo'ube had heard in Jakarta was "technical reasons on PNG side." The opening of the new crossing had been postponed in response to "intelligence reports" and political sensitivities. It was technically possible to drive across the border now, but it was not officially permitted, he said. Those crossing the border must do so on foot and hire a vehicle on the other side. The new crossing would have permitted free passage of vehicle traffic. However, Tolo'ube said, the idea had proved unpopular at home; PNG had always harbored suspicions that Indonesia nurtured designs on its territory, and local people were already referring to the crossing as "the invasion highway." PNG, Tolo'ube said, could envision a scenario in which Indonesia, eyeing the country's abundance of natural resources and seeing that its neighbor was weak and "not doing as well as we ought to," annexed the other half of New Guinea the way it had East Timor.

¶10. (C) Continuing in this vein, Tolo'ube commented on Jakarta's extreme mistrust of any display of Melanesian solidarity. Certain parts of the GOI, he said, had been alarmed by Papuan Governor Bas Suebu's mid-September trip to Port Moresby, during which he had attended Papua New Guinea's National Day celebration. During the trip, Suebu had been made a Companion of the Order of the Star of Melanesia. For some elements of the GOI's security apparatus, this harmless honor could call into question Suebu's commitment to the integration of Papua into Indonesia. On the same trip, Tolo'ube continued, Suebu had met with Indonesian Papuan exiles at Nine Mile. Although Suebu had later said the purpose of the meeting had been to urge the refugees to return to Indonesia, the story had circulated that he had met with exiled separatists. These rumors had been fueled by the fact that an Indonesian media team, hoping to film a news story about the event, had been chased out of the settlement by a hostile crowd.

Comment

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¶11. (C) Consul Tolo'ube's comments on the GOI's nervousness about "Melanesian solidarity" ring true. Still smarting from the East Timor trauma, many in the Indonesian ruling classes are fixated on the danger of efforts to internationalize the Papua problem, notably attempts by some outside critics to revisit the issue of Papua's annexation. Although parts of the national security apparatus, accompanied by the public clamor of freelance "intelligence analysts," express the greatest worry about Australian and U.S. attitudes in this regard, they are also mindful that some of "their" Papuans are seeking support from Melanesian countries such as PNG. Although Governor Suebu's visit to Port Moresby was most likely undertaken for purely pragmatic reasons, it probably does not sit well with those in the GOI who already suspect him of pursuing a covert separatist agenda. End comment.

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